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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0724  
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI IMMEDIATE 0340  
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000684

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF S/E WILLIAMSON, AF/SPG,  
AND AF/C  
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON  
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU  
PARIS FOR KANEDA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/04/2013  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SU](#) [CD](#)  
SUBJECT: POSTURING FOR ELECTIONS, UMMA WORKS TOWARD PEACE  
IN CHAD, DARFUR

REF: NDJAMENA 00136

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Classified By: CDA Alberto Fernandez, Reason: Sections 1.4 (b) and (d)

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Peace So Elections Can Go Forward  
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¶1. (C) Predicting that the National Congress Party and/or the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) may use the ongoing crisis in Darfur as a pretext to postpone the 2009 elections, the Umma Party is seeking to forge a peace settlement for the troubled region and to defuse Chad-Sudan tensions, Umma Party Chairman for Darfur Ismail Khitir Abdelkarim told Poloff on May 1. Elections in Darfur before a workable peace agreement--the prospect of which is made more remote because of the Chad-Sudan conflict--are unrealistic, explained Abdelkarim, who hails from the same Zaghawa tribe as several Darfur rebel leaders and Chadian President Idriss Deby. At the same time, however, a postponement of the elections will result in "chaos." Abdelkarim asserted that the Naivasha negotiations, which culminated in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), "missed their mark" by ignoring Darfurians' legitimate demands. He characterized the Umma Party's current efforts as an attempt to redress this mis-step.

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Umma-NCP Understanding?  
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¶2. (C) Umma is negotiating a memorandum of understanding with the National Congress Party (NCP) to play a mediating role between the NCP and Darfur rebel groups as well as between the Sudanese and Chadian governments. Presidential Advisor Mustafa Osman Ismail "initialed" this memorandum in mid-April, according to Abdelkarim. Following his return from N'djamena, Umma Party Chairman Sadiq Al Mahdi is now scheduled to meet President Bashir during the week of May 5 to finalize a common understanding between the two parties. The NCP fears that it is losing control of events in Sudan, said Abdelkarim. It is therefore amenable to exploring ways to stabilize the political environment in Darfur and the region and to allow greater political space for opposition elements in the government--managed in a way that maintains the NCP's (albeit more limited) influence (reftel).

¶3. (C) Stipulated in the tentative NCP-Umma agreement is that the NCP will work to meet some of the demands of the Darfurian rebels and the region's civilians, including

consolidating the three Darfur states into a single region, compensation for the victims of conflict, equitable power-sharing arrangements based on Darfur's population, and disarmament of the Arab militias, said Abdelkarim. In addition, Al Mahdi secured President Deby's approval to serve as an intermediary with the NCP, and Umma is seeking a similar commitment from Khartoum. If the NCP rejects these overtures--or if there is a new coup attempt against Deby--Khitir pledged that the Umma Party will issue a public condemnation and terminate any discussion of an electoral coalition with the NCP. Without such a coalition, Abdelkarim claimed that the NCP will lose the elections. "We are keeping our options open on the elections," he explained.

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Umma Contact with Darfur, Chad Rebels  
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¶4. (C) In addition, Umma has been in direct contact with the Darfurian and Chadian rebel groups. Party representatives have urged the former to overcome their internal divisions, said Abdelkarim. In turn, they have warned the Chadian rebels that they should "not be fooled by the NCP," which will conclude a deal with Deby irrespective of their interests, and instead participate in political dialogue facilitated by the Umma Party. While Umma-NCP negotiations unfold, the party is refining its strategy for engagement with the various rebel groups--considering, for example, a conference of the Darfur rebel factions, Arab tribal leaders, and government officials to discuss reconciliation. Abdelkarim requested USG-funded capacity building programs to support the Umma Party's "reconciliation" efforts and help prepare it for elections.

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Comment  
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¶5. (C) Umma often overstates its influence in Khartoum and in the party's historic stronghold of Darfur, where its popularity has eroded as a result of five years of intense conflict and the breakdown in traditional tribal structures. The reality is that Umma's influence is being undermined by attempting to interject itself in Darfur/Chad negotiations. Unable to secure itself a powerful share in government at either the federal or state level if it acts alone, Umma is likely to attempt to maintain some relevance in Sudanese politics through a coalition with one of the two major parties in the current Government of National Unity (GNU). An NCP-Umma ticket may be enough for the NCP to win elections in the North, particularly if the SPLM is unable to develop a robust political machine outside Southern Sudan due either to its own internal weakness or to NCP obstruction. An SPLM-Umma ticket could, by contrast, bolster SPLM support in the North but may be hindered by Umma's ambivalence to the CPA and lingering North-South resentments, which are just as prevalent within the Northern elite that composes the Umma Party leadership as they are within the NCP. Any USG support for the Umma Party should take account of these dynamics. End comment.

¶6. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.  
FERNANDEZ